

-\$5.1 Billion for LIHEAP Included in Federal Funding Bill-

Washington, DC – With winter approaching and home heating oil prices near record highs, Congress today approved \$5.1 billion for a government program that helps needy families heat their homes: The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The \$5.1 billion in LIHEAP funds are an increase of \$2.5 billion from last year's funding level.

Also approved was \$250 million for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) helps low-income families cope with rising energy costs by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. Weatherization reduces average heating bills by 32% and overall energy bills by \$358 per year, according to the Department of Energy.

"Both of these programs have an economic multiplier effect that will benefit us all," said Congressman Hall. "They will help families be able to heat their homes this winter as well as help to drive local economies by freeing up funds for low income families to spend on other needs and by supporting local jobs in the home industry."

Congressman Hall repeatedly asked the House Appropriations Committee to increase funding for LIHEAP to help families and low-income seniors afford to heat their homes this winter. Both measures passed as part of H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, the government funding bill that will pay for the federal governments operations through March 6, 2009.

Home heating oil prices in the Hudson Valley today average just under \$3.90 a gallon, almost 40 percent more than a year ago. Prices may rise even more as demand increases during cold weather. The average home heating oil bill is projected to jump by \$882 this winter.

"Higher gas prices, a decimated economy, plus skyrocketing home heating oil costs are going to devastate many in the Hudson Valley once winter arrives," said Hall. "I am relieved that we were able to get this home heating oil funding included in the Continuing Resolution."

The funding measure now goes to the Senate for approval and then to the White House for the President's signature. If this legislation does not become law, the federal government will shut down on October 1, 2008.